

valley with which I shall have to deal, is somewhat north of the center of the state, fifty-four miles south of Sacramento, 100 miles east of San Francisco, and 300 miles north of Los Angeles. Seventy miles east of us, the snow capped Sierras raise their lofty heads, and thirty-five miles west, the Coast Range mountains shut us in from the sea. A little north of west, and from among these giant hills there rises one, higher, and more imposing than the rest,—the point from which California surveys have been made, it is Mt. Diablo. Its crowning glory,—the summit, is no more its pride, for Brother Beer numbers it among his curios, having climbed to the top and brought away the highest point in his pocket. That these mountains should be so far away, seems almost impossible to believe. If one unaccustomed to western distances were asked how far it was to the Sierra Nevada mountains, he would not say more than twenty-five miles while it does not seem to be more than several miles at farthest to the Coast Range, though it is fully twenty-five miles to the nearest point. Since the winter rains have come, the atmosphere has become so clear that one can see every canon and shrub in the nearer ones, and so distinct are the Sierras, that rocky, barren patches are plainly distinguished. From the melting snow on these mountains, there comes an immense supply of water into this great valley. The great height from which it comes, makes its power producing capacity almost incalculable. But as California is not a great manufacturing state, it is unemployed, and so runs unchecked into the sea, except as it is here and there diverted from its channels to water the fields of ranchmen by the way. With the help of this water, if it were properly distributed, as it no doubt will be at some time, this whole valley could be made to blossom as the rose, and yield more gold to the tillers of the soil, than the great mining districts yield to their operators. As it now is, the valley is sparsely populated, and under its present manner of cultivation, cannot be made to support as dense a population as we find in the eastern states. Its soil is more or less sandy throughout, and at many places, is almost pure sand, though in some others there is so little sand as to make real old fashioned Illinois mud when ever it rains. The whole of the valley has been almost wonderfully fertile, but having been sown to grain year after year, for nearly if not quite a quarter of a century, it is losing much of its fertility. As yet, no steps are taken toward re-enriching the impoverished soil, and thus its yield is not nearly what it once was. When this valley shall all be brought under irrigation,

and its large farms, or ranches as they are here called, be cut up into many smaller ones, then shall we see what it is possible to become, but not until then. All this will be done, yes, and is being done even now in many places.

As for Lathrop, it is not any where near so large as Chicago. In fact it is only a small village of about 400 inhabitants, and is located on the Southern Pacific Railroad. It was created by the late Senator Stanford, with the intention of making it a rival of Stockton, because that city would not accede to his wishes on some point in railroad matters. He was then president of this great western system of railroads, and during his lifetime, Lathrop flourished. It is located at the junction of two principle lines of road, and was favored with the company's shops and round house. With these there was the usual compliment of bad men, who received good wages and drank much bad whiskey. Then Lathrop boomed in every sense than the right way. Business was brisk, while many hearts were sore and many heads ached on account of dissipation. Now all is changed. Senator Stanford is dead, and C. P. Huntingdon holds the reins of the railroad system. Having no grudge to feel, and for other reasons, seemingly well known to people here, he has removed the shops to Tracy, while Lathrop, deserted by her best patron, droops and cannot forget her past greatness. Well, she may be the loser in finance, but I doubt not, that if morals were put in the balance, it would be seen that the departure of the shops was a good riddance. We still have the railroad at least, and it is a busy one too, so that we have about a dozen passenger trains per day, besides a large freight traffic. Four great overland passenger trains stop here every day at the noon hour, and give the traveling public an opportunity to obtain refreshments. Two of these trains have come across the continent, from the far east, and two are headed for our far away home and friends across the mountains.

In future papers I shall have much to say of California, but let the reader remember that I shall mean the locality herein so briefly described, unless when otherwise stated.

Lathrop, Calif., Dec. 5, 1896.

JUST BEFORE CHRIST.

M. M. STERLING.

When Christ was born the Roman Empire was called the whole world, for the greater part of it was governed by this powerful monarchy, and thus it was the largest that ever had existed. To this empire the world continued subject for many

years after Christ. All the remote nations were governed by Roman rulers. At the same time, the Senate and the Roman people were in servile submission to Augustus Cæsar, who, by cruelly shedding blood, had obtained a very great degree of power. Thus at this time the Romans had overthrown nearly all kingdoms, conquering the world, and the people became more civilized, attaining a high degree of culture. Although they were sorely oppressed by cruel governors, yet they established unity everywhere. The same languages were understood, and they approached nearer to each other in sentiment and manners.

Augustus Cæsar, after many years of war, had at last established peace, and the Roman Empire had attained its highest glory when Christ was born. Thus peace came into the world as the din of battle had died away, and a gloriously brightened prelude hailed the coming of Christ, and the human mind was at peace.

But every human ally of the Roman nation had its God, and they worshipped demons by ridiculous ceremonies. The gods of the East differed from those of the Gauls, Germans and other northern nations. The Grecian divinities differed from the Egyptians who deified the productions of art and nature. Each people had a peculiar form for worship. However, in a short time, the Greeks and Romans grew ambitious in their religious pretensions, as they had done in their politics.

After Christ the wise part of mankind ridiculed the ridiculous ceremonies of the idolaters. At the time of Christ the religion, as well as the government of Rome, had spread throughout all nations.

And, besides this, the Romans had added several Italian, and other works of fiction, to the Grecian fables, and the Egyptians had a place among their own deities. The religion of most of the eastern nations, that of the Persians, Egyptians and Indians, belongs to that class of religion formed from politics. It was the support of royalty, the preservation of the state, the maintenance of public peace and the advancement of civil virtues. The religion of the northern nations was different, and is classed among the military mode, since tradition among the Germans, Bretons, Celts and Goths have a manifest tendency to excite and retain ferocity, fortitude and an insensibility of danger, and a contempt for life. This was the state of religion when Christianity burst forth from the star in the East, and pierced the great darkness of sin and idolatry.

The Jews were not much better than other nations at the time of the appearance of Christ. The government was very